

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 015959

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2015

TAGS: [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [EAID](#) [MASS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE: KASHMIRI GOVERNMENT VIEWED AS INEFFECTIVE IN EARTHQUAKE CRISIS

Classified By: Derived from DSCG 05-01, b and d

11. (C) Summary: The autonomous Government of Azad Jammu Kashmir (GAJK) has played virtually no role in earthquake relief. Its bureaucracy was devastated along with the capital of Muzaffarabad, while its political leadership (most of which was in Islamabad at the time of the earthquake) has been roundly criticized for a non-existent performance. Senior Kashmiri politicians are involved in individual relief activities and well-publicized tours of disaster areas, but have not wanted to be linked with GOP-relief efforts that many Kashmiris view as inadequate. Recognizing that their political fortunes are inextricably linked to continued GOP support, most Kashmiri politicians have been silent on GOP relief efforts. Several prominent Kashmiris have privately cautioned against any involvement by the GAJK or its bureaucrats in reconstruction efforts, citing widespread corruption in previous development projects. Instead, they believe that coordination should be done through local community councils and legitimate Kashmiri politicians (read Muslim Conference (MC) and All Parties Huriyat Conference (APHC)). End Summary.

12. (C) To date, the GAJK has played a minimal role in relief efforts. Its bureaucracy, mostly based in Muzaffarabad, was decimated by the earthquake, leaving many employees dead, injured, mourning family members, or homeless. Although there were some stories of amazing efforts on the part of individual AJK civil servants, government generally was absent in the quake's immediate aftermath. When authority was reestablished, it was largely by the military, which remains in effective control in the affected areas with some support from federal civil servants imported from other parts of the country. Many Kashmiri civil society activists actually welcomed the GAJK bureaucracy's absence from relief efforts, noting its tendencies towards corruption and inept management.

13. (C) The political leadership of the GAJK was largely outside of Muzaffarabad at the time of the earthquake. (Note: Most senior Kashmiri politicians divide their time between Muzaffarabad and Islamabad, spending the majority in the federal capital. End Note). Many, like the AJK Prime Minister, returned to Muzaffarabad within 48-hours of the earthquake, generally with television crews and journalists in tow. While all have spent a great deal of time touring the affected areas and raising funds, none have taken an active role in the coordination of relief or long-term planning for reconstruction. Even erstwhile political allies have criticized the AJK Prime Minister and his cabinet for being largely absent from disaster management activities and allowing the federal bureaucracy to take the lead. Following long-standing practice, the Federal Relief Commission has coordinated central government efforts with minimal GAJK involvement.

14. (C) Kashmiri politicians have for the most part chosen to absent themselves from formal GOP relief efforts. Instead, they and their respective political parties have been independently raising and distributing funds and donations to earthquake victims. Those that we have spoken with since the disaster, largely from the MC and the APHC, claim privately that many Kashmiris remain resentful of what they view as inadequate central government assistance. Even so, with the exception of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (a pro-independence party with few ties to the GOP), Kashmiri leaders have been largely silent on GOP-relief efforts. Comment: This likely reflects the historical reality that politicians in AJK are largely dependent on the GOP for their political viability. End Comment.

15. (C) All interlocutors agree that the Kashmiri people must be actively involved in reconstruction. There is a high-level of skepticism, however, that the GAJK is suited to administer, or even play an active role, in such efforts. The GAJK is widely-viewed as corrupt, incompetent, and illegitimate. One long-time civil society activist claimed that nearly 65 percent of development projects previously launched by the GAJK were never carried out, despite funds being spent. Others report that senior GAJK officials and their family members, including the Prime Minister, have already established new "construction companies" in the hope of obtaining a portion of reconstruction funds. The JKLF is advocating that Jamaat-ud-Dawa (the parent organization of designated foreign terrorist organization Lashkar-e-Tayyaba)

be taken seriously as a reconstruction partner. Senior APHC and MC figures have publicly and privately suggested that reconstruction is best coordinated through local community councils (appointed advisory bodies established throughout the area that substitute for local elected government) and that "legitimate" Kashmiri parties (i.e. MC and APHC) should be invited to participate in federal reconstruction bodies.

16. (C) Comment: The earthquake has swept away even the nominal fiction of an autonomous GAJK. The paralysis of both its bureaucracy and political leadership during this crisis has made federal intervention essential. As focus shifts from immediate relief to reconstruction, it will become increasingly important for Kashmiris to be involved in planning and execution. While coordination through the GAJK would be the simplest route logistically, post believes that its poor development track record disqualifies the GAJK as a credible implementing partner. The GOP, will need to find ways to involve local communities, perhaps through community councils and political parties, directly in reconstruction, as a corollary to more robust discussions with the GAJK leadership. End Comment.
CROCKER